



International Catholic
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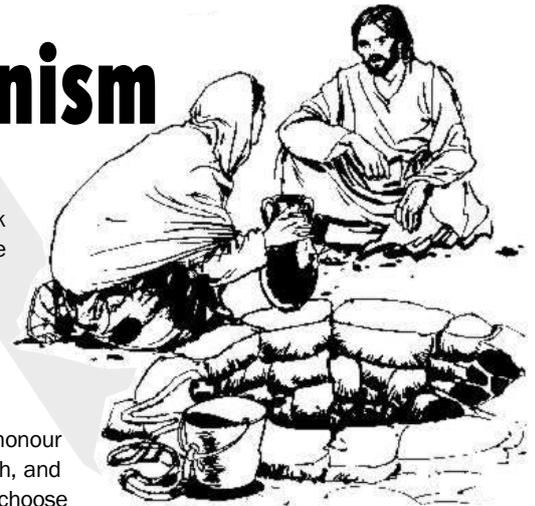
ICCRS NEWSLETTER

Volume XXX, Number 4

July - August 2004

The wise steward: Authentic Ecumenism

by Cathy Brenti



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Questions to ICCRS

Dear William (Guillaume),

You have asked me today to help you understand how to become a faithful servant of Christ within the Catholic faith, and how to find your place among brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations. I would like to start by simply calling to mind the sweet words the Lord has spoken to us, which are forever recorded for each of us.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul...and your neighbour as yourself".

Are there any more beautiful words reminding us of the wonderful grace of ecumenism?

I have already highlighted, by these words, the teaching offered by the Magisterium, and to what end each of us must live, striving for the Kingdom; that is to say, the place where we will be united before God.

How can you truly live this reality day to day? How can you be an authentic witness for Christ, in the spirit of ecumenism?

First though, why do you have this concern? Most likely it is because, like all of us Europeans, you find yourself confronted with a particular situation. - The expansion of the European Union to a greater number of countries is going to shake the ecumenical landscape: until today you faced dialogue between Catholics and Protestants; now you will also encounter, in a new way, your brothers from the Orthodox churches.

You must love, pray, respect and honour.

Love? The commandment which God gives us (we do not choose, but submit ourselves to), is to love our brothers and sisters who belong to different confessions. St. Paul tells us that he who loves unconditionally *"is not jealous, is not proud, does not rejoice at wrongdoing"*.

Pray? Not like the Pharisee who said *"My God, I thank you that I am not*

like the others..." (Lk 18:11) but more like the tax collector who humbly implored God: *"My God, have mercy on me, a sinner"*.

Respect and honour each one in their faith, and in their prayer, and choose always to be the littlest, because *"he who becomes little like a child, will be the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 18:4) and *"whoever does not welcome the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter into it"* (Mk 10:15).

In many places around the world conventions and other, mostly Protestant, events are flourishing and drawing thousands of people. You have shared with me that you are often attracted and seduced by the fervour that seems to have diminished within the Catholic Church, especially in Western countries, and you ask, because of your youth, how to find the right balance and keep your faith. The temptation, certainly, is to get comfortable with that fervour; with the songs that carry you away; which are underdeveloped in the catholic world (note to composers!) and that seduce so many today.

Does the proclamation of the Word of God, often done with great faith and enthusiasm, call you in a way that you have not yet experienced? Then thank the Lord; thank your brothers and sisters who have opened this reality for you; read, reread, 'chew' on the Word. It speaks to you personally; and you will be able to live it in a new way, despite the obstacles.

Have you found new dimensions to fraternal friendships at these gatherings? This communion isn't reserved for your Protestant brothers only; you can desire, choose and decide this for yourself, and those with whom you mingle.

Have you found a new fervour in the charismatic expression? Then why don't you apply this to yourself? You've been prayed over; hands have been laid on you; you have felt the warmth, the anointing of the Holy Spirit as never before. This grace rests not only on a select few, because *"to all who have welcomed Him, the Word of God has given the power to become children of God"*. You are a child of God; that is your heritage. Of course, for some whom you will encounter, this grace has been 'reactivated' in an unusual fashion; but nevertheless, it is your portion, so claim it with faith and audacity!

Are you touched by the elements of adoration and intercession? You can experience these with your friends as well. In more and more places around the world Eucharistic Adoration is being put into place, and the Holy Father has just announced a Eucharistic Year for each of us, beginning in the month of October. So then, adore Jesus! When it's convenient and when it's not! And remind yourself that it is before Him that you will find the fervour that you so desire.

Nothing is stopping you, if you so desire, from gathering one or two of your friends (sufficient in the eyes of the Church: - she is numerous today, do you remember how many she began with?) and 'dive in!' Together, remain small and humble; respect your brothers and sisters from other confessions; pray for them; and share with them, in the love of Christ, the treasures and riches of the Church to which you belong.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul...and your neighbour as yourself. Are there any more beautiful words reminding us of the wonderful grace of ecumenism?"

13th day of blessing : Prayer

by Jean Pliya

“Prayer should not be a chore, but an act of Love; a personal dialogue; the response of man to God. Your constant love is better than life itself; and so I will praise you” (Ps 63: 3). Prayer rekindles love. Without it, we can never be free from our worries and failures”

During the 12 days of blessings, the highlights of our prayer were the morning praise, the adoration of the Eucharist and the Mass. We praised the Lord, prayed, and sang in tongues. We listened to the Word of God, “which filled our hearts with joy and happiness” (Jr 15: 16).

On the 13 day, Jesus invites us to keep praying faithfully because “The blessings of the Lord are new every morning” (Lm 3:23). We must develop and strengthen our prayer-life to grow in love and holiness.

The meaning of prayer. Prayer is a grace given to those who want to love, worship, praise and thank Him through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer should not be a chore, but an act of Love; a personal dialogue; the response of man to God. “Your constant love is better than life itself; and so I will praise you” (Ps 63:3). Prayer rekindles love. Without it, we can never be free from our worries and failures.

Open our hearts to God's presence. Prayer opens us to the presence of God. His Holy Spirit transforms us to be more like Jesus. Continual prayer means we are looking for God, wanting to love and obey Him. It's vital to take time to meet God, to hear His voice and speak with him. If you don't have enough time, just start and the Holy Spirit will give you the grace to continue. Pray simply to God, where-ever you are. For instance, pray “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”.

Various forms of prayer. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray; alone; in community; at adoration... and so on. God is also present in forgiveness, inner healing and of deliverance or simply the silence, because “for God, silence is a praise” (Ps 65:2).

Faithfulness to the Eucharist (Ac 2:42). The mass is the greatest prayer of the Church; the celebration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, giving his life to save the world. We should prepare for this sacrifice by reconciliation with God and with our brothers. Let's contemplate the Lord of glory and adore Him. Eat His body, it will feed and heal you; drink his blood; it will deliver you. Go out and witness to the risen Christ.

The Inner prayer. The grace of the daily mass can continue with inner prayer, “a loving dialogue between God and the Christian who will know that He is loved by his Father in heaven” (St. Theresa of Avila). It is the prayer of the converted, forgiven and repentant sinner.

Silence and Meditation. Inner prayer is the silence of loving encounter.

Contemplate Jesus in the Holy Sacrament or in the mysteries of his life and you will receive His Spirit, who will transform you into the image of Christ. Meditate on the life of Christ through the Gospels, pray the divine office, or pray the Rosary.

In inner prayer, I hear the Word of God and I tell Him “YES” like Mary did. But without the help of the Holy Spirit, nobody can hear the Word of God. “The spirit came on me ...and I heard the one who was speaking to me” (Ez 2:2).

Praise and Blessings. It is good to start and end prayer with praise worship of the Lord. Give thanks to Him with music, dancing and clapping.

When you feel discouraged, praise Him! Be confident that He will grant you his favours. Pray in tongues to edify your spiritual life, to praise the Lord and to intercede.

Intercession and request. God needs people who can intercede.

Simply ask for God's will to be done in your life. “Love is giving all you have; even your life” (St Theresa of the Infant Jesus).

Pray for the conversion of sinners, the spiritual and materials needs of your families and friends, for the Church, for Peace, for your enemies, the deceased and your own needs.

How to develop an strengthen your prayer life.

- Daily meeting with the Lord must be your first priority. Schedule prayer-time and remain faithful to your decision.
- Let the Holy Spirit conduct the prayer; listen to Him and obey Him.
- Start prayer with a joyful heart and a strong and deep faith; because “God is able to do what He has promised” (Rm 4: 20-21).
- Build your prayer on the scriptures.
- Ask the saints, and particularly the Virgin Mary, to intercede for you.
- Prayer is spiritual warfare.
- Strengthen prayer by fasting, sacrifice and remaining vigilant against obstacles to prayer.

Obstacles to prayer. The first one is the Devil who wants to divert and disturb you with impure thoughts.

- Lack of faith, disobedience and doubt destroy your life of prayer.
- Pride, jealousy, criticism and judgement of others, and hardness of heart sadden the Holy Spirit.
- The spirit of quarrelling, bitterness and complaining drive away peace and harmony
- Prayer and tithing to the poor and to the Church are a vital part of a mature Christian life.

Ask God for the grace of prayer.

In conclusion, always ask God for the grace of true prayer. Then decide to pray and organise your time. Ask Him to implement his power in your life so that you may bear good fruit. Maranatha! 

“...How to develop an strengthen your prayer life: Start prayer with a joyful heart and a strong and deep faith; because ‘God is able to do what He has promised...”

ICCRS

International Catholic
Charismatic Renewal Services

Postal Address:

Palazzo della Cancelleria
00120 Vatican City, Europe
Tel.: +39 06 69 88 75 38 / 65

Fax: +39 06 69 88 75 30

E-mail: info@iccrs.org

newsletter@iccrs.org

Web site: <http://www.iccrs.org>

Fax prayer line: +39 06 69 88 75 74

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Report about the 8th International Youth Forum

The International Youth Forum presented the theme for reflection: Youth and University: witnessing to Christ in the university world. The event took place on the outskirts of Rome from 31 March to 4 April and was organised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Participants were young people officially delegated by their Bishops' Conference and by some of the main international Movements, Associations and Communities. ICCRS sent two delegates to this very important event. In line with this we present to you the testimonies of Natan Harrison (Canada) and Constance Minelle (France) who represented ICCRS.



Nathan

Imagine... from all the continents of the world...more than 300 youth delegates... hailing from 90 different countries...30 associations and communities...with the purpose of coming together to discuss living and sharing Catholicism in the context of worldwide universities.

This year's theme was focused on "Witnessing to Christ in the University." Its importance is reinforced by the Holy Father's words, "Human life is culture, (and) Universities are generators of culture in its many expressions that's why it cannot be replaced". He goes on to say that "humanity today has no frontiers" and comments on this period of so called "tolerance".

Summing up the crisis of many universities, John Paul II says, "Rationalism has lost reason".

If universities truly are "generators of culture," we must ask what kind of culture is being formed in the youth of the world during their university years. We must also ask what we can do to positively influence these "generators of culture" at their roots.

Any who might have come expecting a vacation, were blessed with something even greater: joining with the church in broadening our mission and our vision of evangelization.

Being able to participate in this event was truly an honour. In our daily lectures we learned about the founding history and original purpose of universities; how they have changed over time and become what they are today. One of the biggest questions we began to ask was: "What happened to the search for truth?"

Our work group came to the conclusion that all people are seeking Truth, with a capital "T", whether consciously or unconsciously. This may seem debatable, but every human soul longs for Truth. Jesus Christ is Truth personified "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." One person spoke of "finding the Mystery in the formula", which I believe reinforces the fact that the Lord can be found in all truths whether theological or scientific.

Another conclusion our work group came to was that the most effective means of evangelization is through personal witness and one-on-one contact with people. The witness of a genuine Christian lifestyle has a powerful impact on the searching human race. These are just a few examples of the many topics.

On Wednesday afternoon we celebrated this year's World Youth Day, with the Holy Father, in St. Peter's Square. This was an experience of its own, being in the Pope's "home parish" with the youth of Italy and of many other places.

Forming new friendships with people from diverse places and cultures was also an incredible experience. I was also privileged enough to be a part of the music ministry during the forum; playing and singing for Morning Prayer, Mass, and Adoration. Doing music in 4 different languages was challenging, yet meaningful, experience that I will never forget. These things gave the word Catholic (meaning "universal") a whole new meaning for me.

The very last experience of the forum was participating in the Palm Sunday Mass with the Holy Father. We were invited to be in the procession of the mass, carrying palms and going before the Holy Father for a blessing. I went to my seat, which was quite close to the Pope, and cried. I was deeply moved by the whole week, especially by the conclusion... a blessing and Mass with Pope John Paul II. ☺

To contact him directly: nathanharrison@catholic.org



Constance

The theme of the forum was an occasion for the youth, rectors and university professors, bishops and priests present to: Reflect together on faith & reason, ethics & culture, the search for truth, evangelisation, put in common their experiences and ideas, read the Holy Father's messages and pray together.

On Thursday April 1st we met with the Holy Father in preparation of the 19th World Youth Day, last segment of spiritual preparation for the big encounter in Cologne in 2005. The theme "We want to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21): It is not enough to "speak" to young students about Jesus, it must also be made to be "seen" by eloquent life testimonies! (cf. NMI 16).

Right from the start I was particularly moved by the disponibility and interest allowed us by the Holy Father as well as the bishops and priests present at the forum. We were given much attention, not only by taking seriously our remarks, questions and hopes, but also by financing the travelling of the majority of the youth from developing countries.

The consideration from our elder brothers seemed to tell us about St Paul "Do not let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity... you have in you a spiritual gift" (1Tm 4:12-13). What a joy to know that the Lord counts on us to accomplish the works which He has already accomplished for his children! And what support for us, young witnesses that "we are the hope for the church and the world".

I was also moved by the extraordinary beauty of the universal Church. Yes the church is one because it is universal. We are often limited to our parishes, dioceses, countries...however the church in infinitely vaster, bigger and more beautiful! A friend, travelling very far from his fiancée for a month, recommended her to me with these moving words: 'take good care of her, she is all my life'...Christ loves the church, his spouse, to the point of giving his all for her everyday. So similarly, if I search to know and love her better, the knowledge I have of Christ and my love for him are greater! The better I serve the Church, the better I serve my Lord.

And then a poignant encounter with the Holy Father at St Peter's Square! Through him I saw Christ, poor and obedient, bearing the world through his love and faith...He has done so much for the church and the youth...Like Jesus, one senses him consumed by the desire to 'light a fire on the earth' (Lk 12:49) it is already ablaze. Finally, I remember the strong words of Archbishop Rylko (President of Pontifical Council for the Laity): "Revolt against the dictatorship of mediocrity and superficiality, against an invisible and minute religiosity" and "It befalls upon you all who have accepted this Truth as a vocation and certitude of life, to show its inherent goodness within the university campus".

Our days of reflection and work have been very enriching. The conclusion of our proposals for evangelisation are summed up by this formula well imprinted in our memories: "Use 100% of our human, spiritual and intellectual capacities and 100% of means of communication". Christ counts on the explicit testimony of each and everyone of us, let us be then happy witnesses, proud of our faith and of our God! ☺

To contact her directly: constanceminelle@hotmail.com



NEWS FROM THE WORLD

A memory of Ermete Ferrari

We would like to remember and entust to the Lord our dear brother, Ermete Ferrari who departed this life last December, 2003, after a long illness. He was a significant figure in the Renewal in Italy from the very beginning, and was the only lay member of the first National Service Committee of the RnS, on which he served for nine years. A respected lawyer and a distiguished character with a sincere and uncompromising iron will, he accepted many social responsibilities. With a great love for the Church and as a passionate supporter of the Renewal, he was a member of ICCRO (now ICCRS) as the Italian representative from 1982 to 1987. He is now in the arms of the Father, where he continues to intercede for a new pentecost here on earth.

“Then Peter stood up...”



with update documents to 2004!

Ordinary mail : Included in the price of the book
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China



From a report received: "In our parish we have a 'Couples for Christ' ministry, which comes from God though our brethren in the Philippines. We enjoy this fellowship together. However, as most of us are charismatics from Nigeria, baptized in the Holy Spirit, we have gathered together and prayed that God will establish a charismatic movement here and after prayer and fasting, including vigils, we went to our parish priest on January 1-2002. He approved us having a prayer meeting on Saturdays. Brethren, I want to let you know that it is not easy but God is with us. Today the entire parish is experiencing something different. To the Glory of God the Father, the parish priest is happy with us and we are now holding vigils and prayer in the church any time we want to. The Lord has been doing wonderful things here. You all know what it is to be Christians but we are not only Christians, we are Catholics and we are proud of this. But we want to take things gradually, we know that by His

grace, we will accomplish the work we are sent to do. We bless the Almighty God for a wonderful opportunity to be members of the CCR".

Italy



The 17th International Conference of the 'Gesù Risorto Community' of the Italian Catholic Charismatic Renewal was held at Chianciano Terme in Tuscany. The theme was 'be merciful, even as your father is merciful' (Lk. 6:36). Many delegates included community members from Croatia, Germany, Bolivia and Colombia arrived to this gathering. The Eucharistic Celebrations were presided by most Reverend Gervasio Gestori, Bishop of San Benedetto del Tronto, most Reverend Cesare Nosiglia, Archbishop of Vicenza and most Reverend Rodolfo Cetolini Bishop of Pienza, Chiusi and Montepulciano. An overwhelming joy was a highlight of the gathering. The Lord blessed those attending with numerous graces and healings, both physical and spiritual.

Poland



The National Conference of Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) took place at Jasna Gora (Czestochowa), 14-15th May 2004. The first day was for leaders (about 1350 people). The teachings were leaded by Fr. Roman Pindel and Cathy and Claude Brenti. After lunch the whole group was divided into 7 smaller groups who focused on the most important areas of service to which the CCR in Poland is called today: intercession; family; youth; social problems; community life; evangelisation and mass media. The Eucharist was celebrated by Bishop Bronislaw Dembowski and Fr. Andrzej Grefkowicz gave the homily. The second day was an open one. About 180 thousand people came (the third largest meeting in the history of Poland). Jesus' words, "You are the light of the world," were the main idea of that day. The teaching was leaded by Fr. Miroslaw Cholewa and Cathy and Claude. The Eucharist was celebrated for the Bishop Piotr Libera, the Secretary for the Polish Episcopate.

To our writers

Due to increasing costs in the printing and mailing of the ICCRS newsletter, we advise readers that there is now an urgent possibility that we may need to cut back or even suspend production of this bi-monthly publication. The problem has recently become more serious due to the decreasing level of financial support which ICCRS is receiving from many countries whom we serve. Please pray for us in this matter, and please give thought where possible to financially assist us in this difficult situation.

THE CHALLENGE OF HOLINESS

BY JAMT

GOD CHALLENGED ME ONE DAY WHILE I WAS MEDITATING ON HIS WORD: BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY. LV 19:2. SO I WONDERED: WHAT'S IT MEAN TO BE HOLY?



IT IS CEASING TO THINK AS THE WORLD DOES AND STARTING TO THINK AS GOD DOES.

LET YOUR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE, MODELLED BY YOUR NEW MIND. YOU WILL DISCOVER THE WILL OF GOD AND KNOW WHAT IS GOOD, WHAT IT IS THAT GOD WANTS, WHAT IS THE PERFECT THING TO DO. (RM 12:2)



TO BE HOLY IS TO LOVE WITHOUT THINKING OF YOURSELF; TO SHOW JESUS' LOVE, TO OTHERS WITHOUT RESERVATION OR CONDITION.

TO LET CHRIST, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, TURN OUR SHORTCOMINGS TO VIRTUES.



BROTHERS THE LORD LOVES YOU. GOD CHOSE YOU FROM THE BEGINNING TO BE SAVED. SO WE MUST ALWAYS THANK GOD FOR YOU. YOU ARE SAVED BY THE SPIRIT THAT MAKES YOU HOLY AND BY YOUR FAITH IN THE TRUTH.

THEN I LEARNED THAT JESUS' EXAMPLE WAS TO REPRODUCE HIS HOLY CHARACTER IN MY ENVIRONMENT.



SEEK PEACE WITH ALL PEOPLE, AND THE HOLINESS WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE CAN EVER SEE GOD. HEB 12: 14



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ICCRS NEWSLETTER

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The Holy Father on the occasion of the eve of Pentecost

"Open yourselves with docility to the gifts of the Holy Spirit!"



Homily delivered by John Paul II during vespers, on the eve of Pentecost, in which he addressed a message to members of the Renewal in the Spirit about "Burning Bush" at St. Peter's Square, May 29th 2004.

"**V**eni, Creator Spiritus!"
On the solemnity of Pentecost, the whole Church raises unanimously this song: "Veni, Creator Spiritus!"

The Mystical Body of Christ, spread throughout the world, invokes the Spirit from whom it receives life, the vital breath that animates its being and its action.

The antiphons of the Psalms reminded us a few moments ago of the experience of the disciples in the Cenacle: "With the coming of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, they all gathered together" (first antiphon). "Tongues of fire rested on each one of the apostles: The Spirit of God was appearing in the world" (second antiphon). We also live this spiritual experience in this Square, which has become a great cenacle. And, like us, innumerable diocesan and parish communities, associations, movements and groups in all parts of the world raise to heaven the common invocation: Come, Holy Spirit!

I greet the lord cardinals and the other prelates and priests present. I greet all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who have come to participate in this evocative celebration.

I now direct my thoughts to the numerous young people from Lednica, in Poland, who have joined us through radio and television.

From St. Peter's Square I cordially greet the young people meeting for the prayer vigil in Lednica. I pray with you, dear friends, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, fill you with the love of Christ, to whom you entrust your future. My heartfelt blessing.

I greet in a special way the members of Renewal in the Spirit, one of the expressions of the great family of the Catholic Charismatic Movement. Thanks to the Charismatic Movement, many Christians, men and women, youths and adults, have rediscovered Pentecost as a living and present reality in their daily life. I desire that the spirituality of Pentecost be spread in the Church, as a renewed thrust of prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation. In this connection, I encourage the initiative called "Burning Bush", promoted by Renewal in the Spirit. It is about incessant

adoration, day and night, before the Most Holy Sacrament; an invitation to the faithful "to return to the Cenacle" so that, united in the contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery, they intercede for the full unity of Christians and the conversion of sinners. I sincerely desire that this initiative lead many to rediscover the gifts of the Spirit, which have their source in Pentecost.

Dear brothers and sisters! This afternoon's celebration reminds me of the memorable meeting with the ecclesial movements and the new communities of the vigil of Pentecost six years ago. It was an extraordinary manifestation of the unity of the Church, in the richness and variety of charisms, which the Holy Spirit infuses in abundance. I energetically repeat what I said on that occasion: The ecclesial movements and the new communities are a "providential answer", "inspired by the Holy Spirit" given the present need of new evangelization, for which "mature Christian personalities" and "strong Christian communities" are needed.¹

For this reason, I also say to you: "Open yourselves with docility to the gifts of the Holy Spirit! Receive with gratitude and obedience the charisms that the Spirit does not cease to offer! Do not forget that all charisms are given for the common good, that is, for the benefit of the whole Church!"²

"Veni, Sancte Spiritus!"

Among us, with raised hands, is praying the Virgin, Mother of Christ and of the Church. Together with her, let us implore and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, light of truth, strength of authentic peace. We do so with the words of the antiphon to the Magnificat which we will sing later: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of thy love: you who, in the variety of human languages, gather peoples in the one faith, Alleluia"

"Sancte Spiritus, Veni!"

Joannes Paulus II

¹ see "Insegnamenti", XXI, 1 (1998), p.1123

² *Ibid.*, p.1122)

special special special



The Holy Father on the occasion of the ecumenical meeting

“Christianity as a factor that creates identity and unity in the European Union”

Message of Pope John Paul II to the participants of the ecumenical meeting of movements “Miteinander in Europa” (Together for Europe), Stuttgart - Germany, May 6th 2004. This meeting brought together representatives of 175 Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Anglican Movements, linked by satellite to 158 European cities.

On 8 May, in Stuttgart, the Catholic, Evangelical and Orthodox movements are coming together at the *Together for Europe* Meeting to celebrate a European Day of Encounter and Dialogue. It gives me great joy to learn that, precisely when new States are being welcomed into the European Union, Christians in Europe are gathering to reflect on the Christian roots and the future of their Continent in the light of the Gospel. In fact, the light of the Gospel has shone in Europe's history, giving life to an association of different cultures and destinies. Reference to the living Word of the Gospel often led entire peoples to share a common culture and purpose, just like the community that has taken the name of Europe.

Here it is not a question of distant history. When we speak of Christianity in Europe, we also refer to its more recent past, its present and its future. The process of European unification was the outcome of the bitter defeat the Second World War represented for humanity. Consequently, the "fathers" of European unity, the majority of whom identified with the Christian faith, started the unification process whose fruits we are gathering today. Europe began to bring reconciliation and peace to nations that had unfortunately fought one another for centuries. The Holy See supported European integration from the outset, while insisting, as I recently recalled, that for "such a union to be valid and lasting, it is necessary first of all to go back to Christianity as a factor that creates identity and unity".¹

The Christian faith, however, also represents the present and future of Europe. In Stuttgart, with the enthusiasm of their Christian faith and their European awareness, many members of religious movements are showing their confidence in a future of Europe illumined by the Gospel. The multitude of witnesses to the faith who died, victims of the bloody and distressing persecutions in European history in the 20th century, constitute a common heritage for the Christian denominations. May this heritage strengthen

the desire for unity among European Christians and their commitment to further the task of evangelization!

To create a more human society, lovingly open in solidarity to others, we must not tire of opening our hearts to the Gospel. The Christian members of numerous religious movements that have gathered in Stuttgart witness to the fact that the Gospel has led them to overcome selfish nationalism and see Europe as a family of peoples, rich in cultural differences and historical experiences, but at the same time united by a sort of joint destiny. This is the knowledge that tomorrow's Europe needs in order to participate in the great events to which history calls it.

The ecumenical dialogue makes a crucial contribution to developing a European awareness based on the Christian faith. This dialogue is also the focus of the Stuttgart meeting, during which Catholics will discuss with Evangelical and Orthodox Christians the common issues of life on the European Continent. Through their painstaking and respectful dialogue, these movements make an important contribution to strengthening the Lord's commandment of love among Christians.

Yet a united Europe cannot think only of itself and withdraw into its own boundaries and well-being. Europe is called to serve the world, especially its poorest and most forgotten regions, such as Africa in particular, which is scarred by so many serious problems. It is impossible to build a common European house without concern for the general good of humanity: "One could say that the condition for building Europe's future is to be capable of looking beyond its boundaries, especially towards the immense southern hemisphere, which for centuries has been the area where the most numerous conflicts have arisen and where injustice weighs in a manner that can no longer be borne".²

Europe needs the commitment and enthusiasm of Christians, especially the youngest, if it is to receive the

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The Holy Father to the Italian Association of "RnS"

"To be witnesses to the 'reasons of the Spirit': this is your mission"

Message of Pope John Paul II to the leaders and participants at the 27th National Conference of the Italian Association "Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo". Rimini - Italy, April 29th 2004.

I am pleased to once again address my cordial greetings to you this year and, through you, to those who are to take part in the National Meeting of the Groups and Communities of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, which is about to be held in your city of Rimini from April 29th to May 2nd 2004. The theme - "*For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth; be glad for ever at what I am creating*" helps us contemplate the great mystery of Christian joy. I invite everyone to join in with the final prayer of the Apostolic Exhortation "*Christifideles laici*", in which I asked the "Virgin of the Magnificat" to "*teach us to treat the realities of the world with a living sense of Christian responsibility and in the joyous hope for the coming of the kingdom of God, of new heavens and a new earth*".¹ If the meetings of the groups and the communities of the Renewal in the Spirit are truly inspired by the presence of the Spirit of the Lord, especially when they culminate in the celebration of the Eucharist, they are events in which "*earth is opened up to a glimpse of Heaven and from the community of believers comes a perennial hymn of praise, in harmony with the song of the celestial Jerusalem*"² which "*joins together heaven and earth*".³

The Holy Spirit is bound to enrich the testimony of each and every one of you with the "*spiritual gifts with which He endows the Church*".⁴ Among these gifts there are a few that are of particular importance, "*the ones which serve the fullness of spiritual life*", instilling a "*taste for prayer*", which does not exclude "*the experience of silence*".⁵ "*The vast range of gifts whereby the Holy Spirit passes on charity and sanctity to the Church*"⁶ will be to you, my dearest Brothers and Sisters who are taking part in this meeting, a stimulus to spreading the love for Christ and for His Church, "*the only Mother on earth*"⁷ and to bring the praise you raise up to God, under the leadership of your Pastors, within the compass of "*spaces of creativity and adaptation which bring it close to the expressive demands of the many regions, situations and cultures*".⁸

With all my heart I wish for the Renewal in the Holy Spirit to ever more bring forth in the Church that interior conversion without which it would be difficult for human beings to resist the temptations of the flesh and the desires of the world. Our times sorely need men and women who, like rays of light, will know how to convey

the charm of the Gospel and the beauty of the new life in the Spirit. With the sweeping force of prayer of praise and the gushing grace of sacramental life, the Spirit incessantly gives of his gifts to the Ecclesial Community, in order to constantly edify it and increase its beauty. It is necessary, however, to correspond to the Gospel of Christ with the daring of faith, which is the mother of all miracles made by love, with the firm confidence which allows us to pray to God for everything we need to save our souls. All, therefore, as true disciples of Jesus, must apply themselves ceaselessly to following his teachings, turning their journey of spiritual renewal into a permanent school of conversion and holiness.

This is your mission, dear members of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit: to be witnesses of the "*reasons of the Spirit*", in a society where human reason often seems to lack the wisdom that comes from above. While each of you dedicate yourselves to your daily tasks, always remember to place a seed of fruitful hope in the souls of the believers who participate in the activities of your groups and your communities. As I wrote in the Encyclical on the Eucharist "*if the Christian vision leads us to look to new heavens and the new earth this does not weaken, but on the contrary stimulates our sense of responsibility towards the present earth*"; it must make us feel "more than ever committed to avoid neglecting the duties of our earthly citizenship". In this way you can contribute to "edifying a world which is both on a scale with man and corresponds fully to the plan of God".¹⁰

May the Virgin Mary, in the Upper Room with the Apostles in the Upper Room, waiting for the Pentecost, accompany the work at your Meeting. On my part, while I send you my Blessing, I assure you of a special remembrance in my prayers.

From the Vatican, April 29th 2004, Feastday of Saint Catherine of Siena, Patron Saint of Italy and of Europe.

Joannes Paulus II

1 n. 64
2 Spiritus et sponsa, 16
3 cp. Ecclesia de Eucharistia 8,19
4 Teaching of February 27th 1991
5 cp. Spiritus et sponsa, 13-14

6 Teaching of February 27th 1991
7 see Pastores gregis, 13
8 Spiritus et sponsa, 15
9 see Rev. 21.1
10 Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 20

Eucharistic Adoration in CCR:

A providential response

Following the gathering in St Peter's Square with the Holy Father, which became a great Upper Room on Pentecost eve, we have asked Kim Catherine-Marie Kollins, to share more on the Burning Bush Initiative.

What is it?

The Burning Bush Initiative - is a call to help the People of God to return to the Upper Room in adoration and intercession - to experience a Pentecost not only of a moment or a day, but a permanent Pentecost, according to the intuition of Blessed Elena Guerra who, at the end of the nineteenth century, urged Pope Leo XIII to lead the Church back to the Cenacle/Upper Room of Jerusalem, for the Church to be enlightened again and again and burn like a Burning Bush. It is a response to Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "As this millennium begins, allow the successor of Peter to invite the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer". This return is not a return in nostalgia, looking for the beginning experiences of the CCR but with a servant's heart, a maturity, a heart knowing what it is to experience the power of the Spirit and His gifts in prayer, in united contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery.

How it began?

In the heart of the Church in Rome - Easter week 1997 - at a European Catholic Charismatic leaders meeting - in a time of intercession for "new evangelization" of Europe - held in the Chapel of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, my heart was impregnated with the Burning Bush vision of a "return to the Cenacle in adoration and intercession". In the shelter of this chapel, in a protected abode, I would spend nine months as the vision deepened and expanded, grasping that this call was for all, beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a call to the whole Church, to all Christianity.

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Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, "at the beginning of a new millennium, the necessity of a renewed effort on the part of believers to respond to the challenge of the new evangelization is urgently required. In this vision an important role is entrusted to Ecclesial Movements".³

The new evangelization gives a soul to Europe and helps the Continent no longer to live for itself and within its own boundaries, but to build a more humane humanity, respectful of life, and to be a generous presence on the world scene.

I gladly impart my Blessing to the Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart as well as to the Bishops and

How do you think the CCR should respond to this call?

This world-wide call challenges the CCR to go beyond what is so often our normal scope of prayer family, friends, our group or community to incessant adoration and where we may intercede by means of the Spirit with great fervor for the renewal of the Church, full Christian unity and the conversion of sinners, a renewal of society and thereby "a renewal of the face of the earth". As one example: the European CCR National Service Committees have linked together in a united effort for the Pentecost Novena. (promoted night and day, where possible) for these intentions for Europe, according to how the Holy Spirit would lead each NSC in their respective countries. May the Lord multiply many more promoters like Renewal in the Spirit so this initiative may spread world-wide, this is what is hoped for all those who respond to these words. Thereby responding to the Holy Father's prayer for us, "that your communities and the entire Charismatic Renewal will "put our into the deep" of prayer in order to "put out into the deep of mission".

What is implied in the Holy Father's pronouncement during the Pentecost vespers?

This initiative as an invitation to the faithful is not bound to any one ecclesial movement or area, thereby he expresses his hope that this initiative will lead many to rediscover the gifts of the Spirit, whose original source is Pentecost". This will be certainly an instrument to put all the CCR in serving the whole Church through his specific mandate from the Lord: Those who worship in spirit and truth.

priests present at the "Together for Europe" Meeting in Stuttgart. At the same time, I greet all the participants in this important Meeting, the movements that organized it and all those who are united with them in dialogue and prayer. I pray to the almighty and loving God to bless the work of all who spread the Gospel in Europe, and to grant us all a time of peace and solidarity.

From the Vatican, May 6th 2004

Joannes Paulus II

- 1 Address for the Conferral on the Holy Father of the International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen, Germany, Mar. 24th 2004, n.4: *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition [ORE], Apr. 14th 2004, p.9.
- 2 Message to Cardinal Edward Cassidy on the Occasion of the "Prayer Meeting for Peace" in the World held in Brussels, Belgium, 13-15 Sept., 10 Sept. 1992; ORE, Sept. 23 1992, p.1.
- 3 Message to Chiara Lubich for the 60th Anniversary of the Focolare Movement, Dec. 4th 2003; ORE, Jan. 7th 2004.